

21 March 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Justification for Peripheral Flights to Survey
Long Range Air Force Bases

1. At the March 15 Special Group meeting Colonel Steakley, JCS, justified five peripheral flights to obtain photography of the aircraft at forward long range bases on two different bases:

a. The need to improve intelligence on the number of long range aircraft available to the Soviets.

b. To check out the validity of our COMINT in light of the M&M defections.

2. At the time you raised some question on the validity of the first justification but as a result of the over-all discussion the Special Group agreed to authorize such flights upon Secretary Rusk's return. Mr. Johnson of State was given the right to speak for the Group in giving the final go ahead on these flights.

3. I should like to strongly endorse your position that the justification for this type of activity is very weak. As you stated the range of uncertainty in our estimates of Soviet long range aircraft is relatively small and certainly of no critical National security importance. The justification for checking the COMINT appears also very thin, and I have serious question that such photography will indeed serve to confirm or deny the validity of our COMINT coverage of the Soviet long range air force. I have discussed these views generally with Mr. Amory and Mr. Sheldon and they concur. Unfortunately, the USIB has no mechanism for justifying such operations so there has been no opportunity to obtain community views prior to presentation to the Special Group.

4. In view of these facts I believe you should consider reopening the question of whether these flights should be undertaken. While the risk may be small, nevertheless, it is finite and some failure could

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cause another incident perhaps like the RB-47 and prevent other operations which have very much greater intelligence potential. In this connection my present criticism is not aimed at the Kamchatka peripheral flight which has a very much higher potential intelligence pay-off.

/s/
HERBERT SCOVILLE, JR.
Deputy Director
(Research)

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